STAR BLAZER

FANTASY FICTION IN PICTURES No 173

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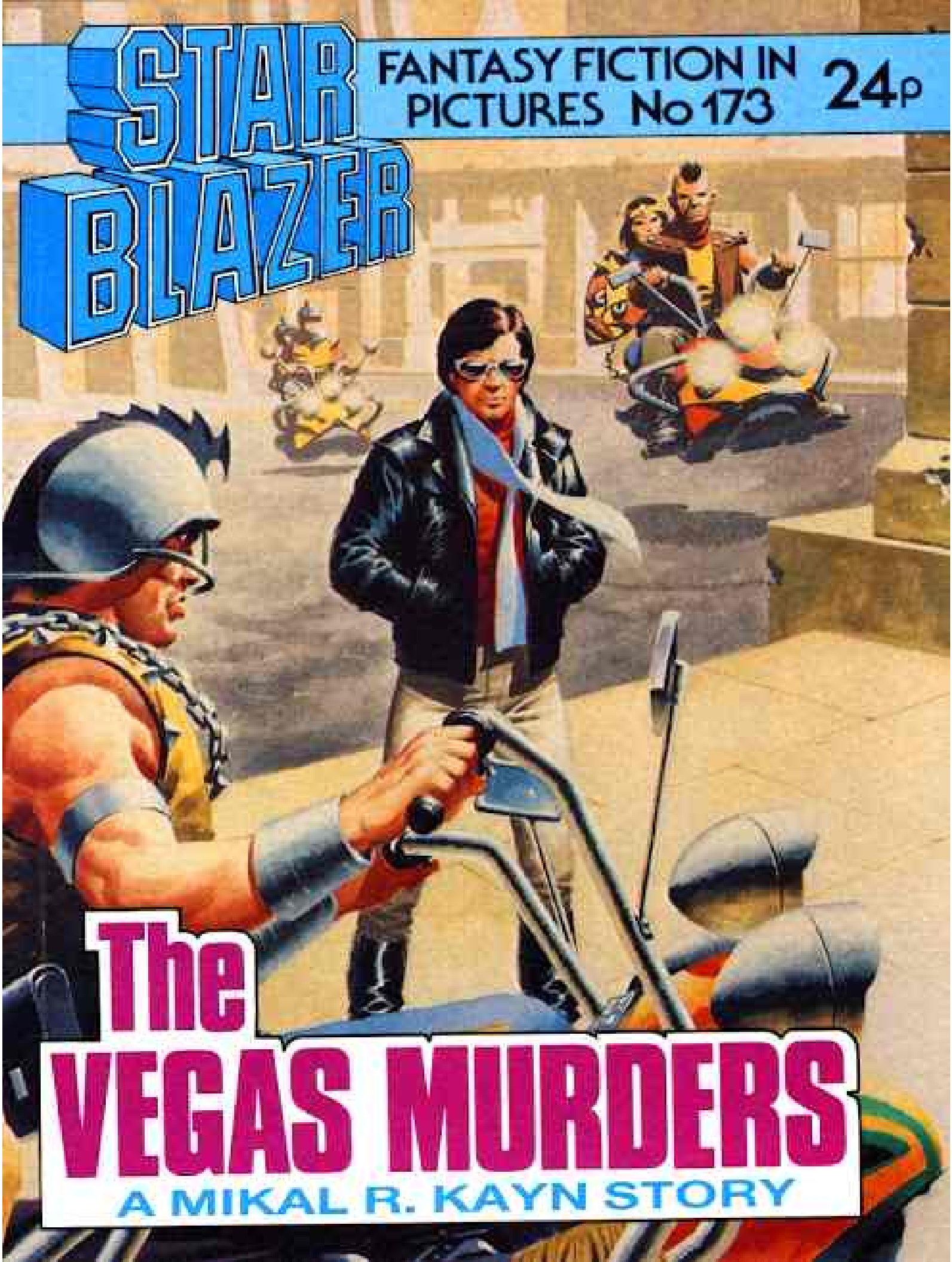

The VEGAS MURDERS

A MIKAL R. KAYN STORY

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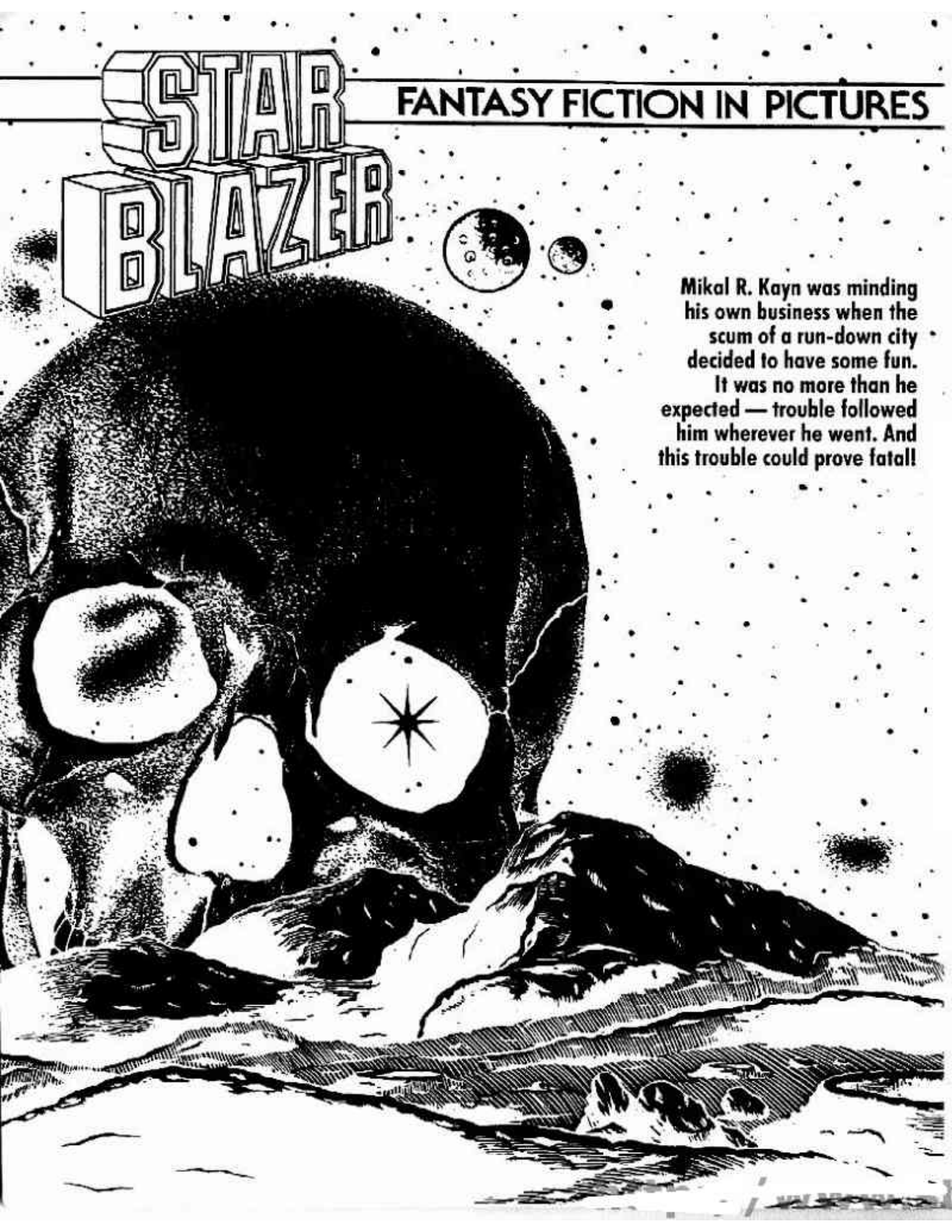


Mikal R. Kayn was minding his own business when the scum of a run-down city decided to have some fun. It was no more than he expected — trouble followed him wherever he went. And this trouble could prove fatal!

THE VEGAS MURDERS

SPACE CITY ONE, MORE COMMONLY KNOWN AS VEGAS, WASN'T MY FAVOURITE CITY. IT WAS A FALSE SORT OF PLACE, FULL OF FALSE PEOPLE WITH THAT ONE BIG WIN ON THEIR MINDS. UNFORTUNATELY, IT WAS ALSO A CHANGING POINT ON THE PAN GALACTIC SPACE ROUTE, AND I HAPPENED TO BE THERE WAITING FOR A FLIGHT.

IN A DESERTED CORRIDOR FAR BELOW MIKAL R. KAYN —
I'M OUT OF BOUNDS, AND FOR THE CHOP IF I'M CAUGHT . . .
AREA DETECTION STOP
12:00

AS THE MAN REACHED FOR THE DOOR HANDLE —
I HOPE HE'S IN!
SFLOP!
BUT TECHNICIAN WALSH WOULD NEVER FIND OUT. SILENTLY HE DIED.
URF!

THE PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT ANNOYED ME SOMEWHAT . . .
. . .WE APOLOGISE FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE, BUT DUE TO CIRCUMSTANCES BEYOND OUR CONTROL, ALL OUTGOING FLIGHTS WILL BE SUSPENDED INDEFINITELY!!
WHAT? TIME TO SEE THE BOSS!

SITTING AROUND FOREVER IN A DEPARTURE LOUNGE ISN'T MY IDEA OF FUN, BUT I FIGURED MY PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR'S CARD COULD GET ME OUT. ANYWAY, THE SECURITY CHIEF WAS AN EX-COP, GORDY ARCHER, AND I KNEW HIM. HE EXPLAINED.
LOOK, KAYN! I'VE GOT A MURDERER STILL ON BOARD, SO THE LAST THING I WANT IS SOME CHEAPJACK P.I. GIVING ME HASSLE. IF YOU WANT TO SPLIT, JUST SPLIT. DON'T FIGURE IT WAS YOU ANYWAY — WE'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU ON SCAN FOR AN HOUR.
HOW CAN I SPLIT WHEN THERE ARE NO FLIGHTS?

JUST AS I WAS ABOUT TO LEAVE, SLADE, THE VEGAS MANAGER APPEARED—
WHO GAVE YOU THE RIGHT TO CLOSE THIS PLACE?
I DID! THERE'S BEEN A MURDER, AND NO-ONE'S GOING TO LEAVE TILL I GET IT CLEANED UP! I'M GOING TO CALL EARTH POLICE.
NO! NO EARTH POLICE! YOU DEAL WITH IT! YOU GOT TILL 6.00 . . . THEN WE OPEN! NO CREW MURDER IS GOING TO CLOSE MY TOWN.

"MY TOWN", I THOUGHT, AND HOW DID HE KNOW IT WAS A CREW MURDER . . .
I DON'T WANT ANY PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR STICKING HIS NOSE IN MY BUSINESS! GET HIM OFF!
NOT POSSIBLE, OLD SLUG! THE CHIEF HAS SLAPPED A RESTRICTION ON EVERYBODY'S MOVEMENTS . . . EVEN MINE.
ER . . . YES! WE HAVEN'T ELIMINATED HIM FROM OUR ENQUIRIES.
SLADE WAS A PARASITE. HE LIVED OFF THE FRUITS OF OTHER PEOPLE'S WORK, AND WHEN HE DIDN'T LIKE SOMEBODY . . .
IF YOU UPSET ANY OF THE CITY'S WEALTHY PATRONS, KAYN, I'LL HAVE YOUR LICENCE, FOLLOWED BY YOUR GUTS.
SLADE . . . I'VE STOOD IN THINGS MORE PLEASANT THAN YOU!!

HAVING TURNED DOWN THE OPPORTUNITY OF LEAVING, IT WAS NATURAL TO INTEREST MYSELF IN THE CASE. GORDY TOOK ME TO THE MORTUARY.
WHY DID YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND?
LET'S JUST SAY SOMETHING STINKS! WHERE'S THE POST MORTEM REPORT?
00702
00712
00704
714

WE LOOKED AT THE REPORT, WHICH DIDN'T TELL ME MUCH EXCEPT THAT HE DIED FROM A DEEP, NARROW WOUND.
SO WHAT WAS A TECHNICIAN DOING IN THE FIRST CLASS AREA IF IT WAS OUT OF BOUNDS?
NO IDEA . . . BUT THEN WHATEVER IT WAS MUST HAVE BEEN WORTH IT. THAT OFFENCE MEANS INSTANT EXPULSION!!

WE TURNED OVER WALSH'S TINY CABIN — NOTHING!! HIS COMPUTER CURSOR WAS FLASHING, SO I IDLY PRESSED 'PRINT'.
WHAT'S THIS DOING LEFT ON?
GIVE ME THE PRINT-OUT . . . I'LL GET IT CHECKED.
PRINT

AFTER ARCHER LEFT, I SAT DOWN TO THINK. ONE OF THOSE EXPENSIVE SMELLS BROUGHT ME BACK TO REALITY.
WHERE'S WALSH?
INDISPOSED! WHO ARE YOU? CAN I HELP?

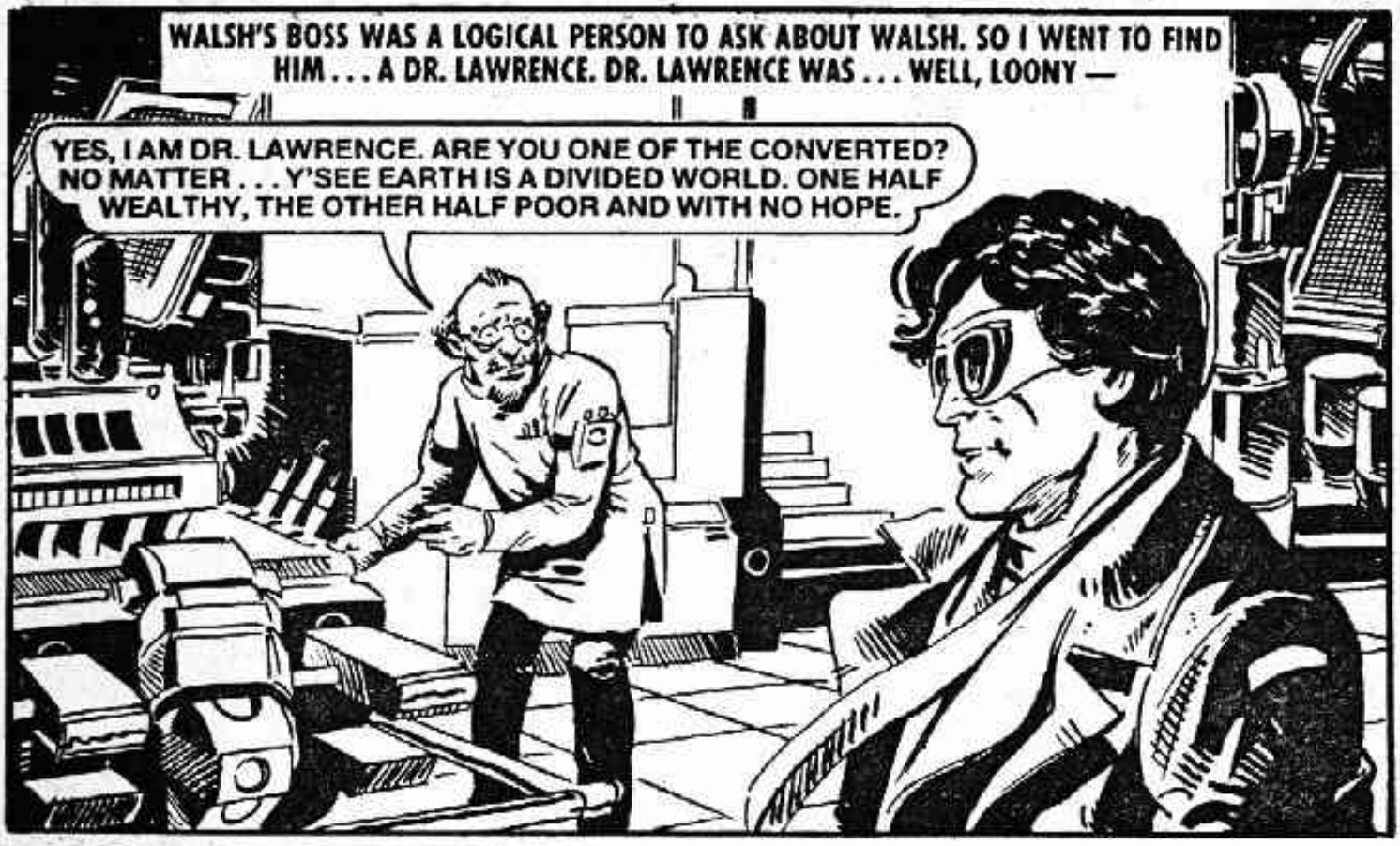
IN ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTIONS . . . NO YOU CAN'T HELP, AND MY NAME IS PAUL PRESLEY THE THIRD!
WELL, MR THE THIRD . . . WHY ARE YOU IN THE CREW'S QUARTERS?
I DIDN'T GO A LOT ON PRESLEY — TOO SMOOTH.
HE WAS REPAIRING A MICRO-CALCULATOR FOR ME. IT'S ONE I USE WHEN PLAYING THE CASINO.
NOT HERE, PAUL, OLD SPROUT. I CAN'T HELP!
PRESLEY LEFT, BUT THE FACT HE'D USED THE PAST TENSE WHEN SPEAKING OF WALSH DIDN'T LEAVE — HE DIDN'T KNOW WALSH WAS DEAD! . . . OR SHOULDN'T HAVE!
MAYBE THE MICRO-CALCULATOR EXPLAINS WHY WALSH WAS IN THE FIRST CLASS AREA. MAYBE . . .

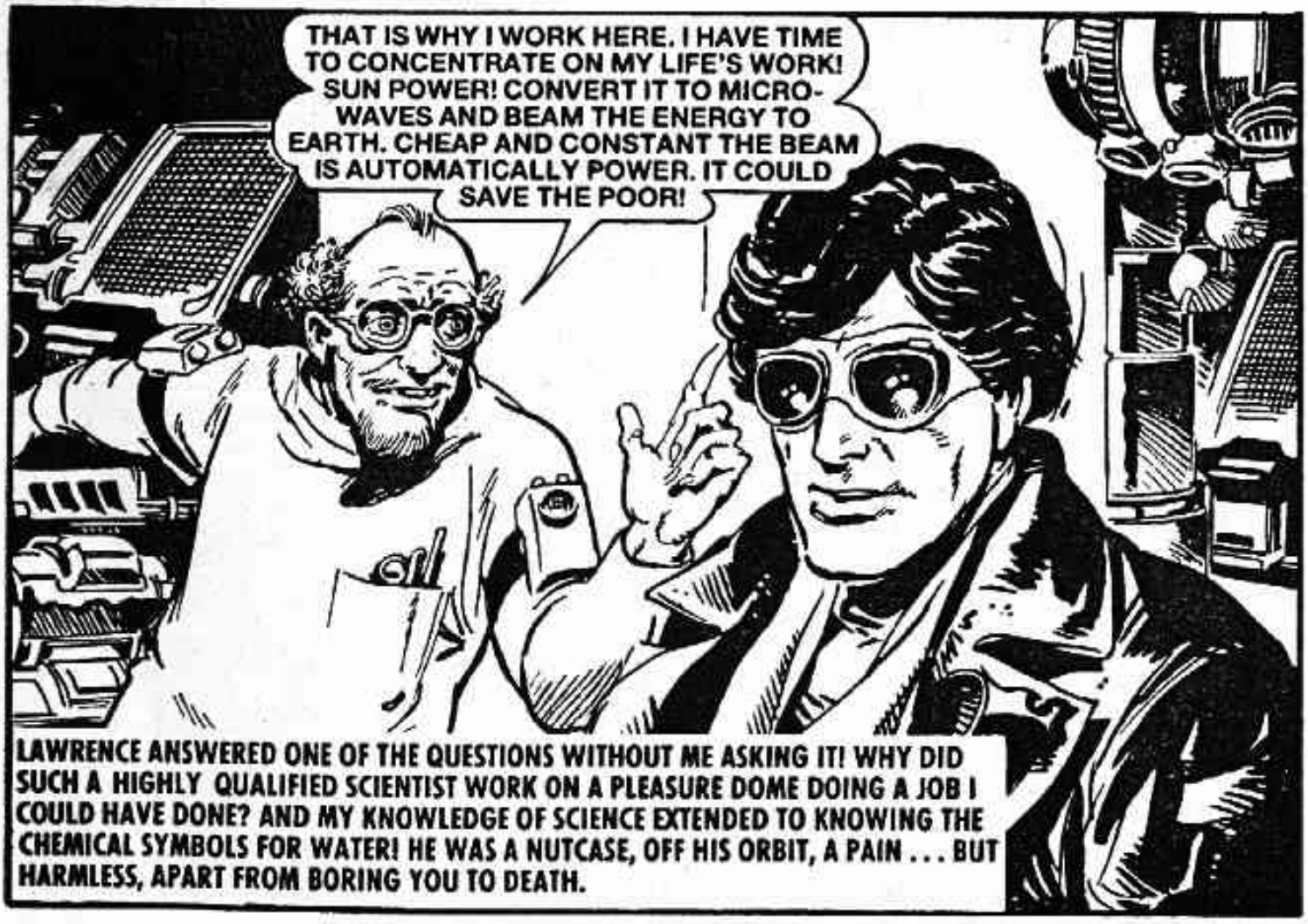
I WONDER IF GORDY HAS DETAILS OF THAT PRINT-OUT.
KLINK!

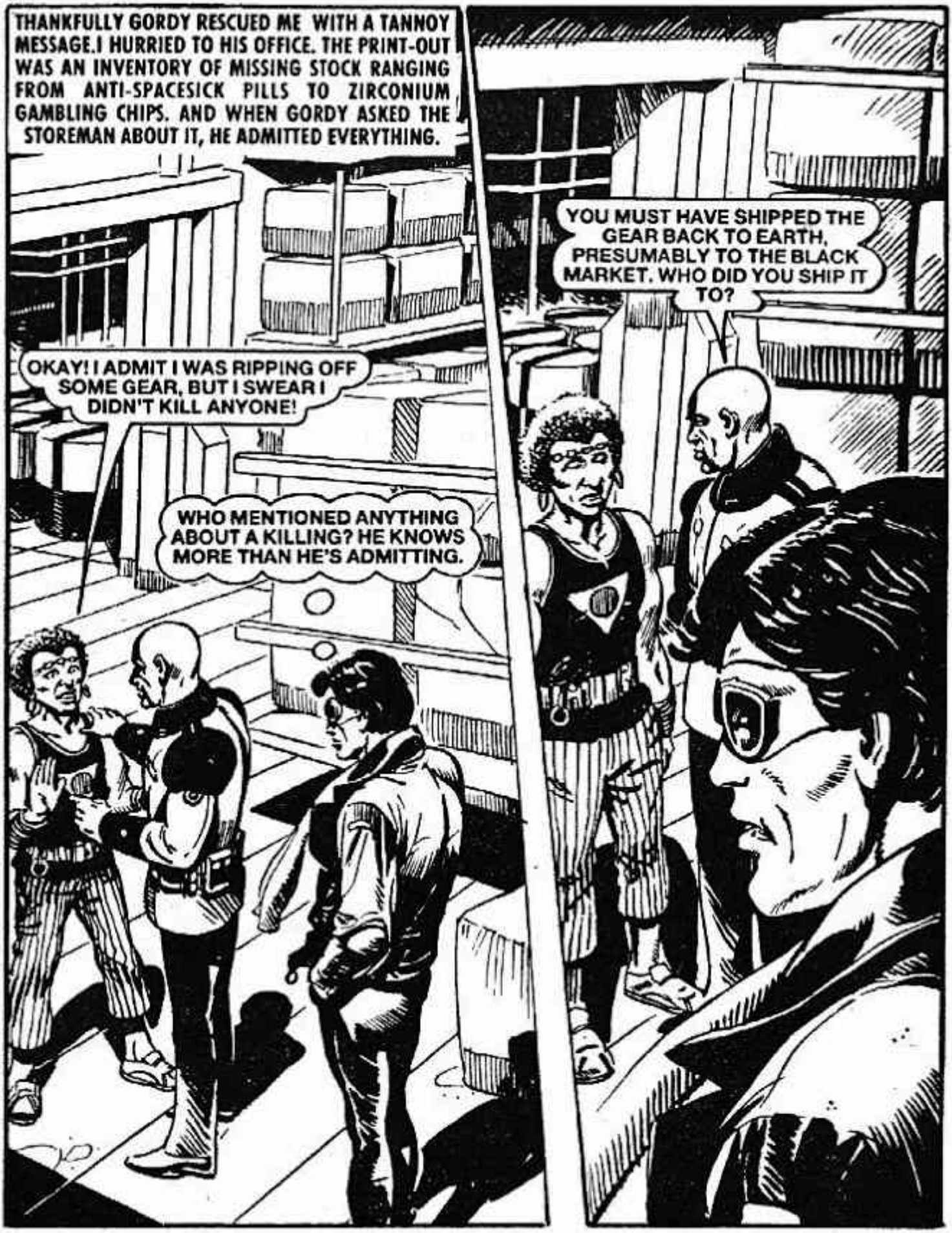
I MAY BE BLIND, BUT I AIN'T DEAF. . . I HEARD SOMETHING BEHIND ME AND YEARS OF SUPICION CAUSED ME TO . . .
SFLOP!

. . . REACT FIRST, AND TO HADES WITH THE QUESTIONS.
WH . . . WHAT?

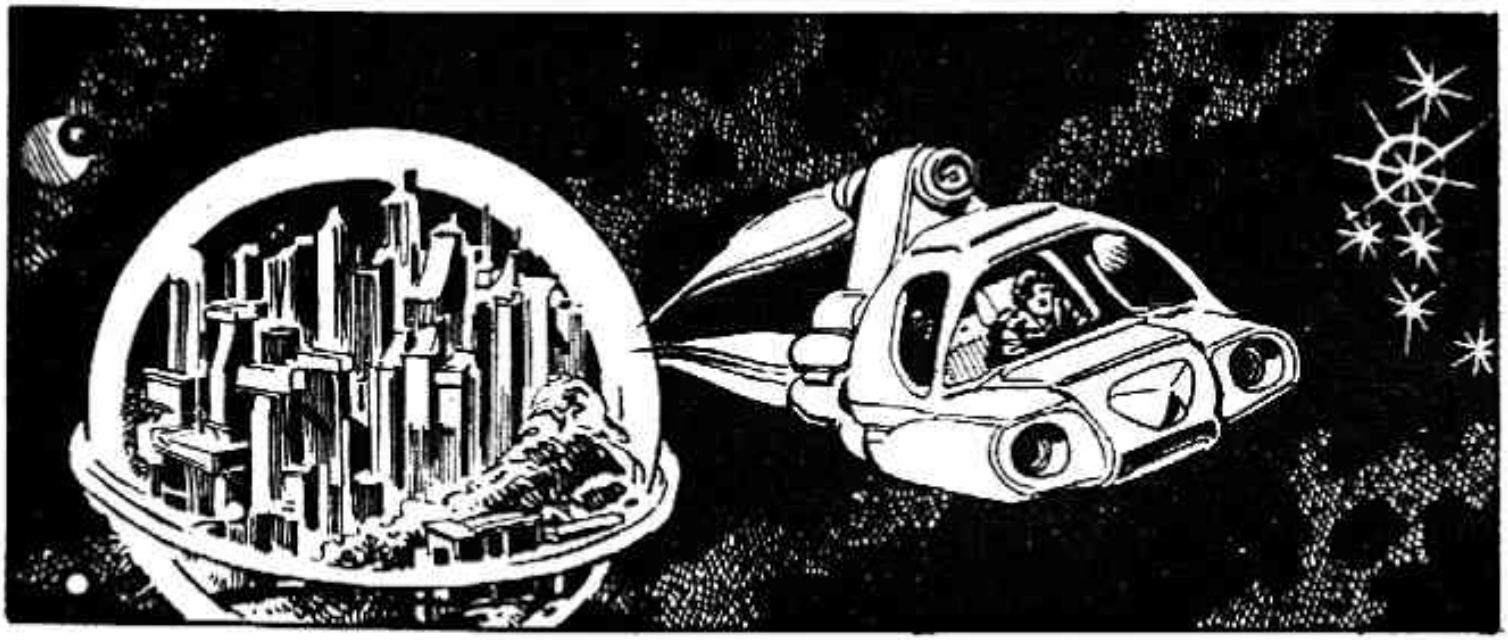
BY THE TIME MY EVASIVE ACTION WAS OVER, THE ASPIRING ASSASSIN WAS GONE . . . BUT SOMETHING INTERESTING REMAINED.
ICE . . . AND IT BURNS! DRY ICE! OF COURSE . . . IT'S FROZEN CARBON DIOXIDE FIRED FROM A LASER! THE ICE KNIFE MELTS LEAVING NO INDICATION OF WHAT CAUSES THE WOUND.


WALSH'S BOSS WAS A LOGICAL PERSON TO ASK ABOUT WALSH. SO I WENT TO FIND HIM . . . A DR. LAWRENCE. DR. LAWRENCE WAS . . . WELL, LOONY —
YES, I AM DR. LAWRENCE. ARE YOU ONE OF THE CONVERTED? NO MATTER . . . Y'SEE EARTH IS A DIVIDED WORLD. ONE HALF WEALTHY, THE OTHER HALF POOR AND WITH NO HOPE.


THAT IS WHY I WORK HERE. I HAVE TIME TO CONCENTRATE ON MY LIFE'S WORK! SUN POWER! CONVERT IT TO MICRO-WAVES AND BEAM THE ENERGY TO EARTH. CHEAP AND CONSTANT THE BEAM IS AUTOMATICALLY POWER. IT COULD SAVE THE POOR!
LAWRENCE ANSWERED ONE OF THE QUESTIONS WITHOUT ME ASKING IT! WHY DID SUCH A HIGHLY QUALIFIED SCIENTIST WORK ON A PLEASURE DOME DOING A JOB I COULD HAVE DONE? AND MY KNOWLEDGE OF SCIENCE EXTENDED TO KNOWING THE CHEMICAL SYMBOLS FOR WATER! HE WAS A NUTCASE, OFF HIS ORBIT, A PAIN . . . BUT HARMLESS, APART FROM BORING YOU TO DEATH.


THANKFULLY GORDY RESCUED ME WITH A TANNOY MESSAGE.I HURRIED TO HIS OFFICE. THE PRINT-OUT WAS AN INVENTORY OF MISSING STOCK RANGING FROM ANTI-SPACESICK PILLS TO ZIRCONIUM GAMBLING CHIPS. AND WHEN GORDY ASKED THE STOREMAN ABOUT IT, HE ADMITTED EVERYTHING.
OKAY! I ADMIT I WAS RIPPING OFF SOME GEAR, BUT I SWEAR I DIDN'T KILL ANYONE!
WHO MENTIONED ANYTHING ABOUT A KILLING? HE KNOWS MORE THAN HE'S ADMITTING.
YOU MUST HAVE SHIPPED THE GEAR BACK TO EARTH, PRESUMABLY TO THE BLACK MARKET. WHO DID YOU SHIP IT TO?

I DECIDED TO MAKE A TRIP TO SEE EARL ON EARTH. GORDY ARRANGED CLEARANCE, AND HIS PRIVATE SHUTTLE!



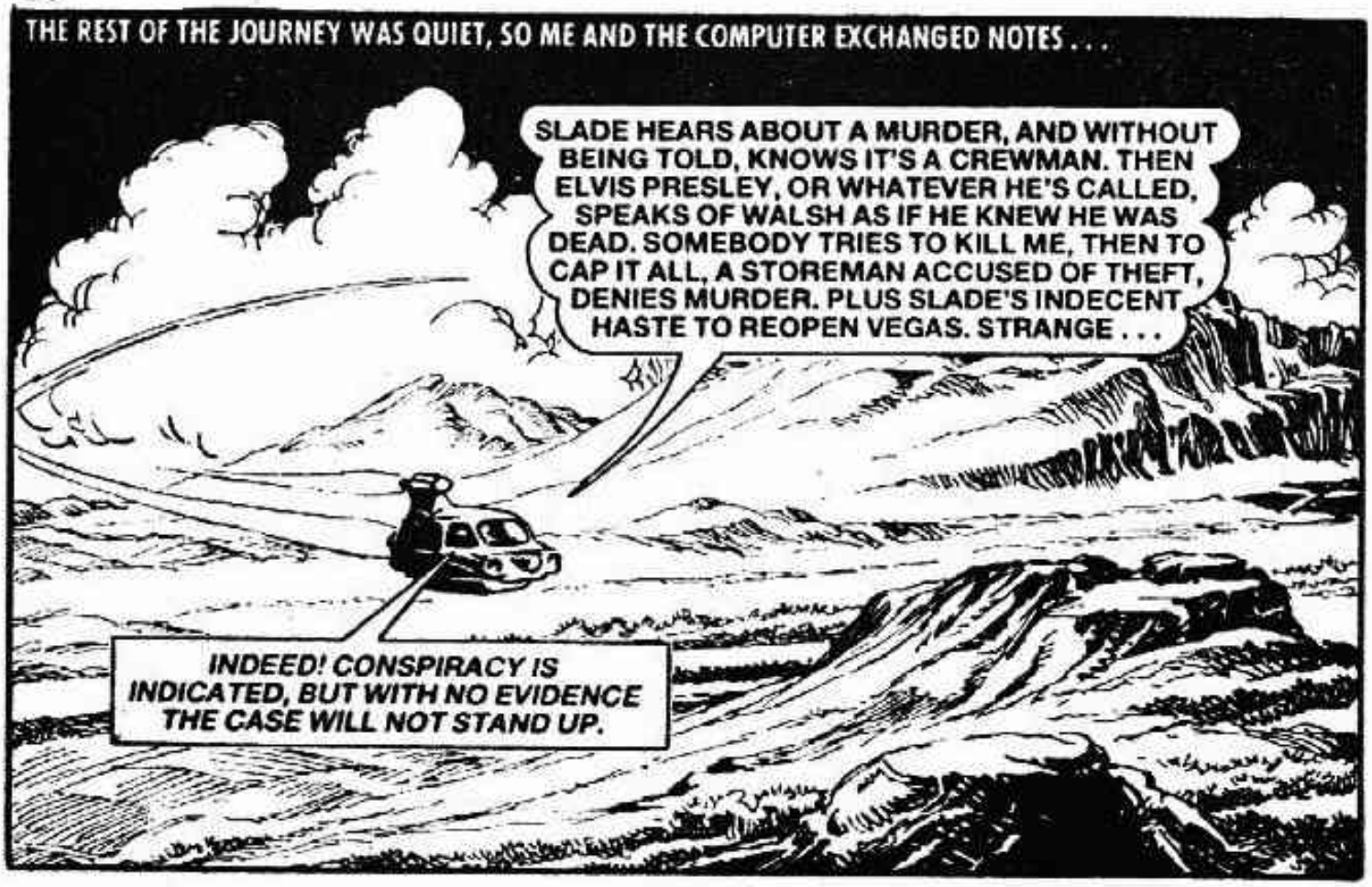
TWO UNITS INTO THE TRIP WE, THAT IS, THE COMPUTER AND I, ENCOUNTERED A ROCKSTREAM.
BETTER SKIRT THIS . . .
UNMARKED SHIP APPROACHING —
. . . HOSTILE!
YOU DON'T SAY! GIVE ME MANUAL CONTROL.
IT WAS EASY TO TELL THE CRAFT WAS HOSTILE . . . IT WAS FIRING AT US.

THE COMPUTER OBLIGED —
LET'S SEE IF THEY FOLLOW US.
AT MAXIMUM ACCELERATION, WE DIVED STRAIGHT INTO THE DEADLY STREAM OF METALLIC ROCK.
THIS IS MADNESS! I INSIST YOU REFRAIN FROM THIS COURSE OF ACTION.
AS A GREAT PHILOSOPHER ONCE SAID, "SHUT UP"!

WITH A LETHAL MASS OF ROCK AND METAL ORE IN FRONT AND A MURDEROUS CRUISER ON OUR TAIL THINGS WERE A LITTLE INTERESTING.

THE COMPUTER CHATTERED TO A HALT, SCARED SPEECHLESS! ME, I WASN'T SCARED. PETRIFIED WAS A MORE ACCURATE DESCRIPTION.
HELLLLP!

SUDDENLY THERE WERE NO ROCKS —
SKILFUL PILOTING, YOU'LL ADMIT.
NUTS!
RUDE COMPUTER, I THOUGHT.
BUT THE CRUISER SKIDDED INTO THE STREAM, AND CEASED TO BE A THREAT.


THE REST OF THE JOURNEY WAS QUIET, SO ME AND THE COMPUTER EXCHANGED NOTES . . .
SLADE HEARS ABOUT A MURDER, AND WITHOUT BEING TOLD, KNOWS IT'S A CREWMAN. THEN ELVIS PRESLEY, OR WHATEVER HE'S CALLED, SPEAKS OF WALSH AS IF HE KNEW HE WAS DEAD. SOMEBODY TRIES TO KILL ME, THEN TO CAP IT ALL, A STOREMAN ACCUSED OF THEFT, DENIES MURDER. PLUS SLADE'S INDECENT HASTE TO REOPEN VEGAS. STRANGE . . .
INDEED! CONSPIRACY IS INDICATED, BUT WITH NO EVIDENCE THE CASE WILL NOT STAND UP.

ONCE ON EARTH I DECIDED TO REPORT THE CRUISER INCIDENT.
NEVER ANY BLUES ABOUT WHEN YOU NEED THEM. I SUPPOSE I'LL HAVE TO GO TO THE NEAREST PRECINCT STATION.
SO, AT THE NEAREST POLICE STATION.
EXCUSE ME . . . MY NAME IS MIKAL KAYN. I WOULD LIKE TO REPORT AN ACCIDENT.
POLIC

LITTLE INTEREST WAS SHOWN IN MY ACCIDENT REPORT, UNTIL I IDLY ASKED WHERE I COULD FIND EARL — THE BARON.
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH THE BARON?
I'M A PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR . . . IT'S IN CONNECTION WITH A THEFT!
POLI

THE INSPECTOR'S DISINTEREST IMMEDIATELY DISAPPEARED.
EARL! WE'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO PIN ANYTHING ON HIM. IF YOU NAIL HIM, USE THIS — WE'LL HAVE A HOVCOPTER ON STAND-BY. WE DON'T HAVE THE MANPOWER TO HELP.

A PATROL CAR WHISKED ME AWAY TO THE WILDERNESS, WITH CO-OPERATION THAT MADE ME SUSPICIOUS.
!!!
EARL'S A BIT ON THE WILD SIDE — BUT NOT AS WILD AS THE MUTANT DOGS OUT HERE. JUST WATCH YOUR STEP. I'LL DROP YOU HERE!
POLICE

THE WILDERNESS WAS A MAZE OF RUINS, AS IF SOMEONE HAD FIRE-BOMBED THE SLUMS. I SMELT THE DECAY OF YEARS. MAYBE DOC LAWRENCE WAS RIGHT, MAYBE HIS RESEARCH COULD BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO THESE AREAS.
COO-EE... ANYBODY AT HOME!

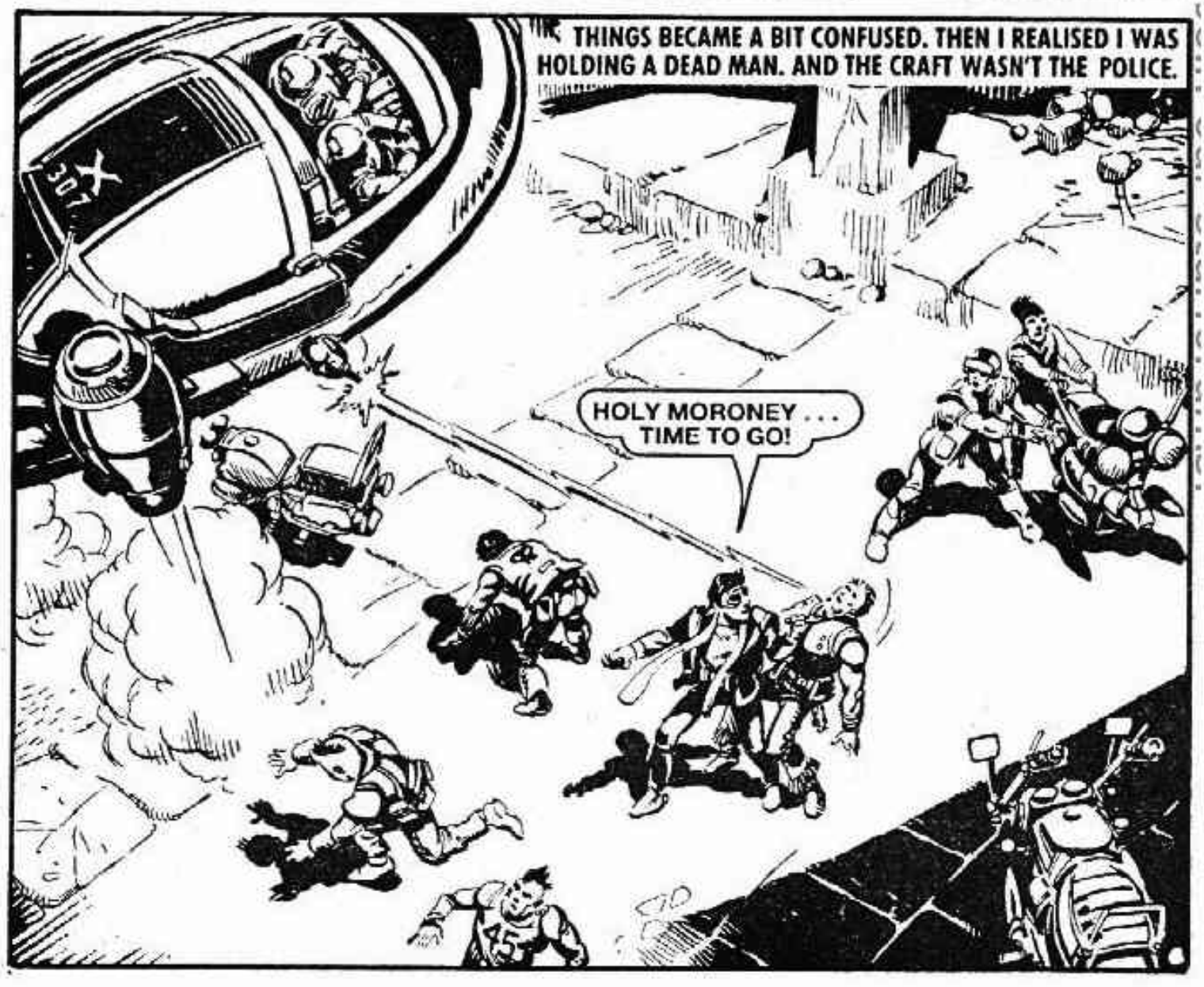
SOMEBODY WAS AT HOME.
MR EARL AND COMPANY, I PRESUME! WE HAVE A MUTAL FRIEND. ASID GOULD, STOREMAN ON VEGAS.
45

YOU CAME HERE TO TELL ME THAT?
NO . . . HE'S IN A POLICE ISO-KUBE. HE CONFESSED TO THEFT AND GAVE YUR NAME.

SO? I GET MYSELF ANOTHER SUPPLIER.
NOT FOR TWENTY YEARS IF I CAN HELP IT . . . I HAVE REASON TO BELIEVE YOU CAN HELP ME WITH MY ENQUIRIES.

FUZZ . . . I HATE FUZZ . . !
I EAT THEM FOR BREAKFAST.
EAT THAT, THEN!
BOOT!
I HAULED EARL TO HIS FEET —
OKAY, CONSTABLES! DROP IN AND COLLECT THE GOODS.

I'D BARELY STOPPED SPEAKING . . .
IMPRESSIVELY QUICK!


THINGS BECAME A BIT CONFUSED. THEN I REALISED I WAS HOLDING A DEAD MAN. AND THE CRAFT WASN'T THE POLICE.
HOLY MORONEY . . . TIME TO GO!
307
45

HERE WE GO AGAIN! SOMEBODY WANTS ME DEAD — VERY BADLY.
EVENTUALLY MY OUT-OF-CONDITION-BODY CALLED A HALT. FORTUNATELY THE SLUM AREA PROVIDED PLENTY COVER.
MY STUNNER'S NO MATCH FOR THEIR LASER RIFLES.

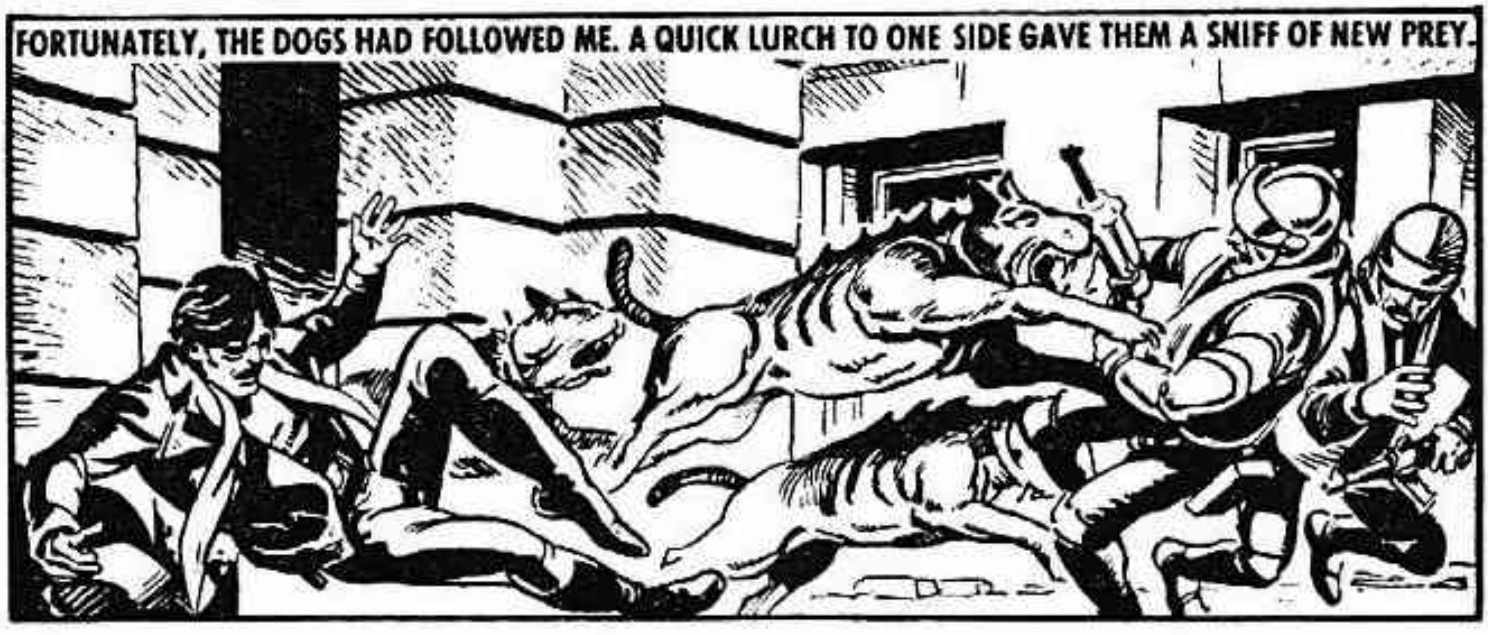
A SAVAGE SNARLING TURNED MY BLOOD TO ICE.
DOGS!!
OH, JUPE!

THERE SHOULD BE A GOVERNMENT HEALTH WARNING ABOUT THIS LOT!

THE MUTANT DOGS WERE WILD AND GIANT-SIZED. MY THINK-TANK WENT INTO HIGH GEAR.
IF I SET MY STUNNER ON LOW POWER . . .
THE NOISE WILL CONFUSE THEM . . . FOR A SHORT TIME.
WHINE!

THE DOGS WHIMPERED AND RETREATED — SO DID I.

OH, NO!
GOOD MORNIN', MR KAYN.


FORTUNATELY, THE DOGS HAD FOLLOWED ME. A QUICK LURCH TO ONE SIDE GAVE THEM A SNIFF OF NEW PREY.

THE BOYS IN BLUE FINALLY ANSWERED MY CALL.
THREE TIMES SOMEBODY'S TRIED TO STOP ME BREATHING . . . WHY IS THIS INVESTIGATION CAUSING SO MUCH TROUBLE?
BACK AT HEADQUARTERS, I WASN'T ALLOWED TO GO UNTIL I'D BEEN INTRODUCED TO A BIGWIG —
THIS IS COMMANDER CLARK, AND HE HAS SOMETHING TO SAY . . .
WALSH WAS OUR MAN, AN UNDERCOVER AGENT—
HE WAS ON VEGAS TO ESTABLISH A LINK BETWEEN THESE THEFTS, AND A GROUP OF TERRORISTS. WE KNOW THAT EARL TOOK A CUT FROM THE SALE OF THESE GOODS. THE REST WENT TO SOMEBODY WE ARE ANXIOUS TO QUESTION.

IN FACT, THE CRUISER THAT ATTACKED YOU WAS A TERRORIST CRAFT.
SO I WASN'T MEANT TO REACH EARTH!

I EXCUSED MYSELF.
I'VE STIRRED UP A HORNET'S NEST!

I HAD TO WARN GORDY ARCHER TO WATCH OUT, SOMETHING BIG WAS UP.
TRUST NOBODY, GORDY. I'VE NO EVIDENCE, BUT SOMETHING BIG IS GOING ON!
VID-FONO
LOOK, KAYN, I'VE KNOWN YOU FOR A LONG TIME, NEVER REALLY LIKED YOU, BUT I KNOW YOU'RE HONEST! I'LL DO WHAT YOU SAY — KEEP IN TOUCH.
WITH THAT UNSOLICITED TESTIMONIAL, I WARPED OUT WITH A MIND FULL OF QUESTIONS, AND NO ANSWERS . . .
BUT I KNOW WHERE I MIGHT FIND THE ANSWERS . . .

THE ASTEROID BELT WAS LIKE . . . LIKE THE WILD WEST. FOR THE MOST PART, THE LAW AVOIDED IT AND BECAUSE OF THAT, THE UNLAWFUL PATRONISED IT.
THE BELT SHELTERED A LOT OF LAWBREAKERS, BUT ONE DIDN'T ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS IN ASTEROID CITY, MY DESTINATION.
I NEED A REAL SLEAZEHOUSE — SOMEWHERE OLD GUYS WOULD HANG OUT.
I TRIED A FEW SMALL BARS, AND A FEW GRIM BEERS BEFORE I FOUND A REAL OLD-TIMER.
YOU LOOK LIKE YOU MIGHT KNOW THE LOCAL HISTORY, FRIEND.
SURE DO! BIN HERE SINCE '49 . . . AIN'T NOTHING I DON'T KNOW. MIND YOU . . . I'LL NEED A DRINK TO REFRESH MY MEMORY.

I EMPTIED MY POCKETS . . . IT WAS THE RENT CREDS, BUT OLD JAMIE, AS HE WAS CALLED, SEEMED HAPPY ENOUGH. I ASKED HIM IF THERE WERE ANY ABANDONED ASTEROID MINES BIG ENOUGH TO TAKE A FEW GOOD-SIZED CRAFT.
OLD PHAROS MINE WAS A BIG ONE. A HOLLOWED OUT ASTEROID NOW. BIN DERELICT FOR TWENTY YEAR.
I'LL KEEP THESE FOR AFTER! OLD PHAROS GOT ITSELF A BAD REPUTATION TOO. MINERS AVOID IT . . . OR DON'T COME BACK. DON'T BOTHER ME NONE. I POP AROUND LOOKIN' FOR THE ODD PIECE OF STUFF THAT'S BEEN LEFT. I'LL TAKE YOU!

IT'S KAYN! YOU CAN EXPECT A VISIT . . .

JAMIE'S SHIP RATTLED AND CREAKED ALL THE WAY TO OLD PHAROS.
NOBODY AIN'T GOING TO BOTHER MY OLD SHIP, MR KAYN.

THEN I SAW A SPACE YACHT. IT WAS OUT OF PLACE, AND MY BLOOD RAN COLD.
THIS JUST HAS TO BE THE PLACE.
JAMIE LANDED SAFELY—
YOU TAKE CARE NOW! THIS ASTEROID IS A MITE TRICKY.
PHAROS WAS JUST A CHUNK OF BARREN ROCK IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE, AIRLESS AND DESERTED, BUT WITH A LUXURY SPACE YACHT CASUALLY SITTING ON ITS SURFACE.
WHAT IS THAT YACHT DOING HERE? AND WHO ARE THE PEOPLE WHO BROUGHT IT HERE?
A FEW THINGS BOTHERED ME . . . IF THE SPACE YACHT HAD ANYTHING TO DO WITH THE TERRORISTS, THEY'D HIDE IT . . . UNLESS IT WAS A TRAP!!!!!

THE ENTRANCE TO THE TUNNEL WAS DARK, BUT WHEN I HOPEFULLY PRESSED AN AIRLOCK BUTTON.
LIGHT! SOMEBODY IS DOWN HERE!
THE AIR WAS BREATHABLE, SO OFF CAME MY HELMET. WHAT TOOK MY BREATH AWAY WAS SOMETHING ROUND THE FIRST CORNER.
WELL, HELLO, BIG FELLOW!

THE BIG FELLOW GRUNTED! I WASTED NO TIME INTRODUCING MYSELF . . .
WE HAVEN'T BEEN INTRODUCED, BUT . . .

IT WAS THEN I REALISED THE GIANT WAS A CYBORG, PART FLESH — BUT MOSTLY PLASTISTEEL AND MIROCHIPS.
WHOOPS! MY MISTAKE!

I WAS STILL DAZED WHEN HE PICKED ME UP AND PUT THE SQUEEZE ON.
YOU NOT BEAT ME, KAYN!
HE KNEW ME! THAT WAS THE LAST THING I REMEMBERED BEFORE I SPIRALLED DOWN INTO A POOL OF DARKNESS!

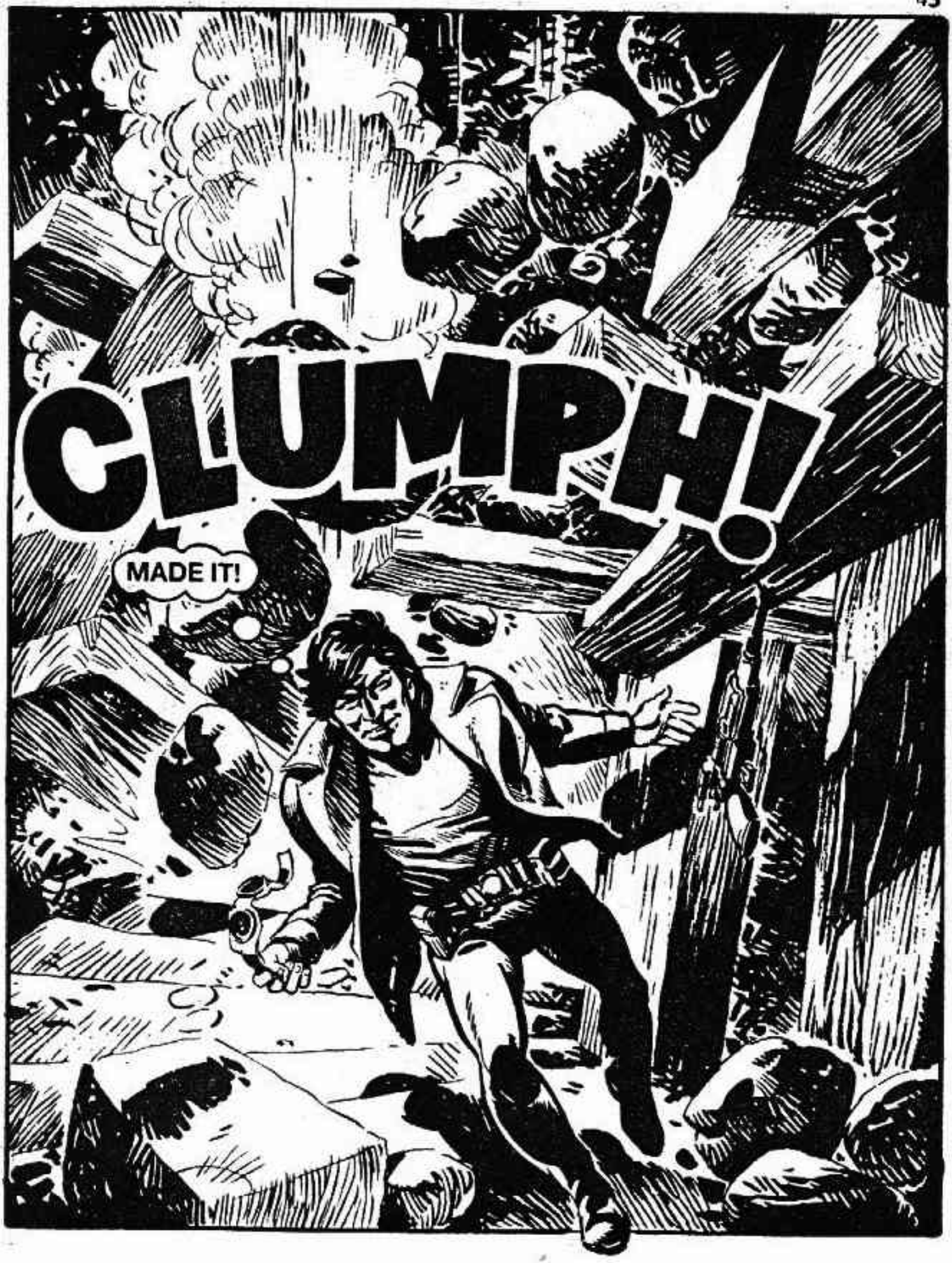
WHEN I RETURNED TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING I WAS SURE I'D BEEN RECYCLED. MY FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE SITUATION WASN'T TOO PROMISING.
BACK WITH US, KAYN? NOW THE BOSS WANTS TO SEE YOU.
I'M DELIGHTED!
THE BOSS WANTS US TO JOIN HIM ON VEGAS, AND YOU'RE OUR PASSPORT SEEING AS IT'S SEALED UP TIGHTER THAN AN AIRLOCK.

MY EYES HURT SO I TOOK OFF MY GLASSES. BECAUSE OF AN ACCIDENT I COULD ONLY SEE IN INFRA RED WITHOUT THEM. THAT'S WHEN IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT I COULD SORT OF SEE IN THE DARK — HE COULDN'T.
I GOT ONE HAND AROUND A CHUNK OF ROCK . . .
WHAT YOU GOING TO DO WITH THAT?

I WAS GOING TO PUT THE LIGHTS OUT!
CRAK!
ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY!!!!!
DARK — ISN'T IT!

THEY WERE SHOOTING BLIND, AS I HEADED FOR SAFETY.

THIS SHOULD HOLD THEM . . . IF IT DOESN'T BURY ME ALIVE FIRST!


CLUMPH!
MADE IT!

I COLLECTED MY HELMET AT THE AIR-LOCK AND WENT TOPSIDE. JAMIE WAS STILL THERE.

JAMIE HOT-TAILED IT OUT AND BACK AT ASTEROID CITY...
THANKS FOR THE HELP, JAMIE.
ANY TIME, MISTER KAYN.

VEGAS WAS MY NEXT, OR MAYBE, LAST STOP.

BACK ON BOARD VEGAS, NOTHING APPEARED TO HAVE CHANGED. THINGS WENT ON AS IF NOTHING HAD HAPPENED. ANGER WELLED UP, AND I HEADED FOR GORDY ARCHER'S OFFICE.
THEY DON'T CARE . . . THEY JUST DON'T CARE!
FANCY DRESS PARTY

I BURST INTO GORDY'S OFFICE AND GOT A BIG SURPRISE.
SLADE . . . WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
LOOKING FOR THE CODE TO RE-OPEN VEGAS!

THAT'S ARCHER'S JOB!
NOT ANY MORE . . . HE WAS WASTED! I'M IN CHARGE NOW . . . BEAT IT, KAYN.
FUMING, I STORMED OUT—
NAME'S MIK ENZI,MR KAYN— ARCHER'S DEPUTY.
WHAT HAPPENED?
MURDERED . . . SAME WAY AS WALSH, I RECKON.
JUST BECAUSE HE KEPT VEGAS CLOSED . . . NO,SURELY NOT!

WE ENDED UP AT VEGAS' HUGE POWER PLANT. AN UNEASY FEELING CAME OVER ME.
Y'KNOW . . . I THINK GORDY WAS MURDERED BECAUSE HE WOULDN'T RE-OPEN VEGAS. WHICH COULD MEAN THAT SOMEBODY ON VEGAS NEEDS IT OPEN BECAUSE THEY EXPECT VISITORS—
TERRORISTS!
WHAT WOULD TERRORISTS WANT WITH VEGAS? IT'S NOT STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT.
RIGHT! BUT IT IS A STABLE PLATFORM! A LANDING AREA? A GUN PLATFORM . . . I DON'T KNOW . . .

FAR ABOVE KAYN—
IS THIS PLACE OPEN YET? I'M EXPECTING . . . ER . . . FRIENDS.
I HAVE JUST ISSUED THE ORDER TO OPEN. I NOTICED YOUR YACHT RETURNING.
MY BLOOD FROZE, FOR THE THIRD TIME, WHEN I SAW THE YACHT.
THAT SHIP . . . I'VE SEEN HER BEFORE . . . ON PHAROS? MIK . . . GET YOUR MEN.

BIP...
BIP...
BIP...
BIP...
TROUBLE IN HANGAR THIRTEEN, SIR!
SEND A CALL TO STAR CORPS.
ON SCREEN WAS A FAMILIAR FIGURE—
MOVE IT! DON'T STOP FOR ANYONE!

THE TERRORISTS JUST SHOT ANYBODY IN THEIR WAY.
SCUM!

THEY TOOK THE COMMUNICATIONS CENTRE—
THEY DIDN'T GIVE MY MEN A CHANCE TO SURRENDER.

SLADE FOUND OUT THE PRICE OF HIS CO-OPERATION.
DON'T KILL ME, PLEASE . . . I'VE HELPED YOU . . .
NO, DON'T, TURK! WE MIGHT NEED HIM AS A HOSTAGE.
PRESLEY . . . HE'S BEHIND THIS!
HE MUST HAVE KNOWN WALSH WAS AN UNDERCOVER MAN AND KILLED HIM. THROUGH SLADE HE KNEW I WAS INVESTIGATING EARL, AND TRIED TO KILL ME. GORDY WAS THEN KILLED BECAUSE HE THREATENED TO RUIN THE CAREFULLY PLANNED SCHEDULE. SLADE WAS HEAD OF VEGAS, NO DOUBT CREAMING THE PROFITS FOR HIMSELF.

WE WATCHED ON THE VID-SCREEN.

GIVE ME A DIRECT LINK WITH EARTH .
COMING UP, BOSS!

PRESLEY DIDN'T BOTHER WITH THREATS. HE DEMONSTRATED HIS POWER.

SURRENDER . . . OR I'LL BURN EARTH. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL RESULT IN THE RAZING OF A CITY OF MY CHOICE. YOU HAVE SIX UNITS TO COMPLY.

THE PANIC STARTED, BUT NOW WE KNEW WHAT WE WERE UP AGAINST, WE COULD MAKE PLANS. IF ANYBODY COULD THINK OF SOMETHING.
I'LL GET ALL MY MEN TOGETHER AND WE'LL RUSH THE BEAM CONTROL.
YEAH . . . WE'D BE FRAZZED!
WE'VE GOT TO STOP THEM FIRING THAT MICROBEAM.
YOU'RE RIGHT! REMEMBER YOU MENTIONED A STABLE PLATFORM . . . WELL, WHAT IF WE DESTABILISE IT?

MIK HAD HIT ON THE ONLY THING WE COULD DO. WE MADE RAPID PLANS AND I SLIPPED AWAY ON MY OWN.
THAT'S MY WORK DONE! NOW TO REJOIN MIK.
AWAP
PART OF THE POWER PLANT WAS THE STABILISING SECTION. A SERIES OF JETS THAT KEPT VEGAS STABLE AS IT REVOLVED.
OKAY, SECURE THIS ROOM. I DON'T WANT ANY INTERRUPTIONS.

TO AIM THE MICRO-WAVE BEAM WHERE HE WANTED, PRESLEY NEEDED VEGAS STEADY IN ITS ORBIT . . .
SHUT OFF THE JETS!
I DAREN'T . . . IT WOULD BE THE END OF THE CITY!

SO MIK TOOK RESPONSIBILITY—
ON YOU GO, MR KAYN.

WITH THE STABILISING JETS SHUT DOWN THE ROOM WENT QUIET AS A TOMB, THEN RED LIGHTS FLASHED . . . SIRENS WENT OFF . . . PANDEMONIUM STARTED.
WE'RE LEAVING ORBIT!.

THE BEAM'S MISSING EARTH! TURK, GET VEGAS BACK IN ORBIT.
C'MON, YOU GUYS!
THE VISITORS WERE EXPECTED—
STABILISING CONTROL
OKAY, LET'S SORT THIS LOT OUT.

CONCENTRATED FIRE FROM HEAVY DUTY BLASTERS ANNIHILATED ALL BUT ONE OF THE TERRORISTS.
AARGH!

TURK TOOK A BIT OF STOPPING.
VEGAS DRIFTED INTO THE ROCK STORM. THE ROOM QUAKED. A WINDOW SHATTERED, AND AIR RUSHED OUT . . .
SUIT UP!!

MY PLAN WAS WORKING TOO WELL. WE HAD DRIFTED OUT OF ORBIT . . . INTO THE DEADLY PATH OF METALLIC ORE SHOT FROM THE MOON.

STAR CORPS CHOSE THEIR MOMENT WELL. THE TERRORISTS WERE IN FLIGHT WHEN THEY ARRIVED.

IT WAS NOT HARD TO GUESS WHERE I'D FIND PRESLEY . . .
KEEP BACK, OR SLADE DIES!
WHY SHOULD THAT BOTHER ME? HE'S ONE OF YOUR CORRUPT LITTLE GANG!
YOU'RE SMART, KAYN, BUT FOR YOU NONE OF THIS NEED HAVE HAPPENED.
SFFF...
NOW YOU SHALL DIE LIKE WALSH, LIKE ARCHER . . .
SPROOF

I DIDN'T INTEND SNUFFING IT STANDING STILL, SO I JUMPED AT SLADE AND PRESLEY.
AAAAH!

THE PAIN WAS BAD, AND SLADE'S WAILING ANNOYED ME . . .
VEGAS RUINED . . . THIS IS ALL YOUR FAULT, KAYN! IF YOU'D LEFT THINGS ALONE . . . I WAS DOING NO HARM . . .

NO HARM! IF YOU'D LET GORDY CALL THE COPS IN THE FIRST PLACE, PRESLEY'S GAME WOULD HAVE BEEN STOPPED. SO, SHUT IT, FATSO!
PRESLEY'S AWAY! WE COULDN'T CATCH HIM!
YOU DIDN'T NEED TO . . .

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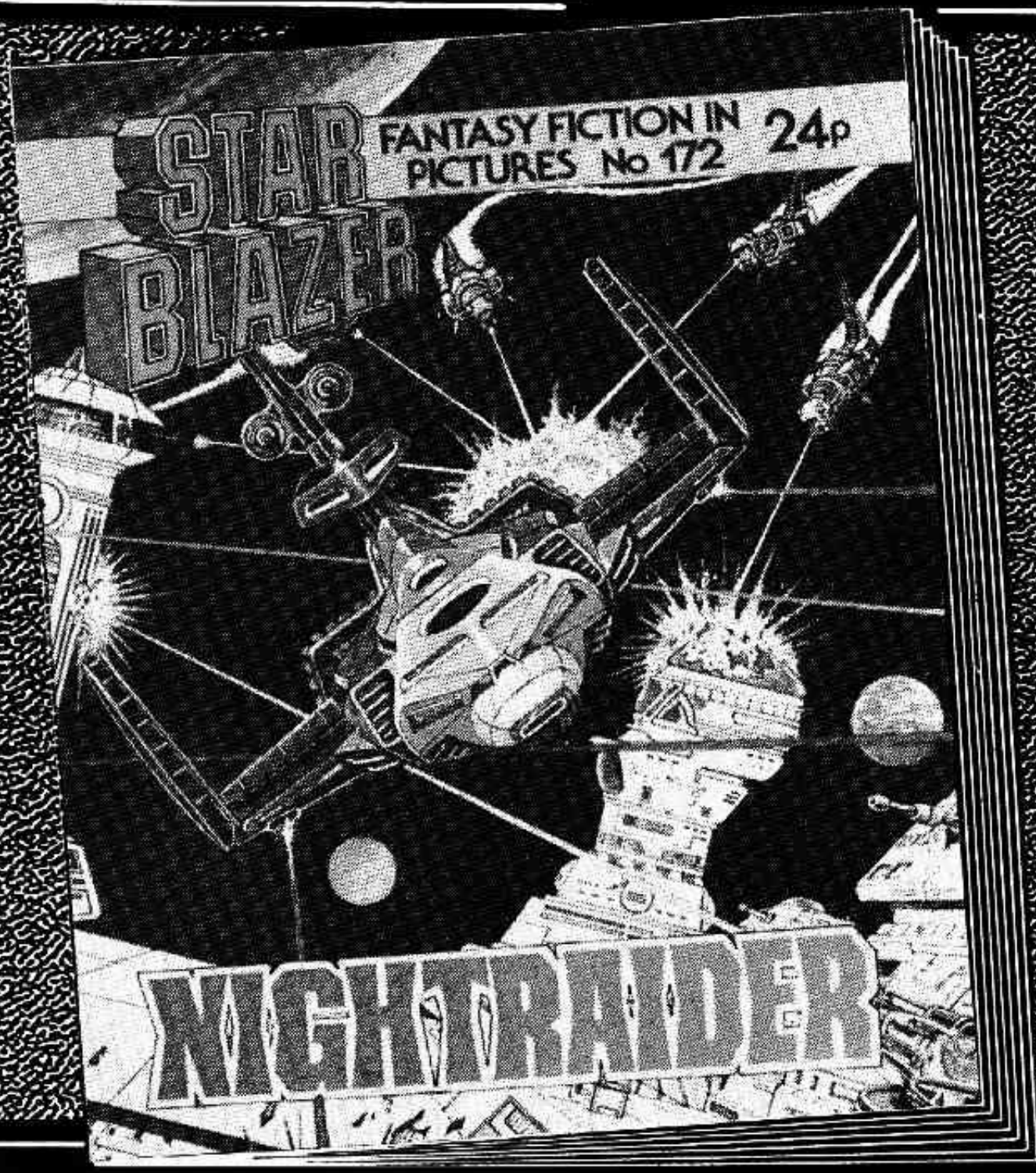
DON'T FORGET THIS MONTH'S *OTHER*



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